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>>> NEWSLETTER <<<

APFNet ALUMNI

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE APFNet ALUMNI NETWORK

TOP NEWS OF THE MONTH

SAVING FORESTS FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS

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These days, one might think understanding the importance of forests for our planet should be easy - even a fifth grader knows that forests are the lungs of the Earth. Yet despite this common knowledge, the world's forest area continues to decrease at an alarming rate due to the expansion of agriculture, timber production, urbanization, and road construction.

IN THIS ISSUE:

GAINS OF STUDYING IN A UNIVERSITY ABROAD

Moving to a different economy for university studies is getting more common all over the globe and without doubt, it has a lot of benefits for a young researcher. Though, why is it mandatory to change your country for university and why should young students make such a choice? Does it worth of leaving your family at home and go to a foreign country? It has been a topic of discussion for a long time and there are even studies for this issue. Definitely, there are people who are for or against studying abroad, but there are a lot of returns, and these advantages overcame the negative aspects.

Moreover, living away from home helps people to become adults and learn to live alone solving their own problems. When a young man doesn't depend on his or her family, he or she must make their decision freely and it makes them to think like an adult, to grow up mentally. In addition to this, it is crucial for a foreign student to make his living and not taking money from home. Making your own money prepares one to live like an adult. Making your living doesn't mean only earning money, but also knowing how to spend it economically.

To begin with, leaving your home country and living a few years abroad can expand person's horizons and tolerance. Thinking that travelling abroad is enlarging one's outlook, it is obvious that living abroad as a student gives a person priceless perspective of view. In an international university student from different economies live together and each sharing the culture of his country. It gives a person a chance to get accustomed with cultures and increases live experience. For instance, it can be very amusing for a central and south Asian student to meet someone from China doing hard work and having a very distinct lifestyle. They can gain valuable general knowledge. To give another illustration, a Chinese and a central Asian student can exchange information about their culture or food that is common in their home economies.

NANJING FORESTRY UNIVERSITY (NFU) TRIP TO LAOS TO CARRY OUT ENROLLMENT PROMOTION AND COOPERATION EXCHANGE

On March 23rd–25th, the representatives of Nanjing Forestry University visited the School of Forestry at the National University of Laos on an agenda to promote international cooperation and exchange between the NFU and other countries along the "Belt and Road" Initiative and to enhance our university's international reputation and influence. The National University of Laos is the top educational institution in Laos and a well-known university along the "Belt and Road Initiative," offering similar fields of research and majors as the NFU.

The delegation included: Professor Mao Lingfeng (head of the delegation), the Deputy Deans of the Schools of Biology and Environment and International Education, Professor Ren Hao, and the Director of the Admissions Office of the School of International Education, Mrs. Zhang Ying. The delegation part was met by Professor Lamphoun Sayvongsa, the Deputy Dean of the School of Forestry, Professor Vongvilay Vongkhamsao, the Director of the Planning and Cooperation Department of the Lao National Agriculture and Forestry Research Center, and a representative board of teachers and students from the School of Forestry at the National University of Laos. We received a warm welcome from Professor Lamphoun Sayvongsa, who also gave us a brief introduction and overview of the development of the School of Forestry. Vice President Ren Hao also gave a quick overview of the countries along the "Belt and Road Initiative," which are significant sources for NFU's international student enrollment.

On behalf of the School of Training, Deputy Dean Mao Lingfeng introduced some typical information about NFU, such as subject direction, international student training, and international cooperation and exchanges. Participants from both sides also engaged in deep discussions and viewpoint exchanges on issues like inter-school exchanges, shared training, and collaborative scientific research. Mrs. Zhang Ying, the Director of the Admissions Office, introduced hot topics that students care about, such as scholarship programs, enrollment majors, and application procedures.

It is our hope and belief that these two universities can collaborate on scientific research and student exchange programs; thus, building a model of China-Laos higher forestry education collaboration by welcoming excellent students from the National University of Laos to study at our institution.

ZHANG YING, DIRECTOR OF THE ADMISSIONS OFFICE, SCHOOL OF INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION, NFU (THE FORTH FROM THE RIGHT)

The team then visited several other places, including the National University of Laos Veneer Production and Product Research Center, the Lao Forestry Research Center, Sangthong Forest Farm, Burapha Agriculture and Forestry Plantation, and Laos' largest plywood production factory (Kokoda Ply).

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This visit is both diverse in content and well-targeted. The relationship between the alumni of the Belt and Road Initiative and their alma mater has successfully increased the popularity and influence of our school in Laos. This was accomplished through enrollment publicity, cooperation, and exchanges. It has also widened international cooperation and exchanges between our university and Lao universities and government agencies.

Since 2014, NFU has trained a total of 16 Laotian students from the Asia-Pacific Forest Organization Scholarship Program (APFNet), pursuing Master's degrees in forestry, forestry engineering, environmental engineering, and forest management.

During the trip, the delegation convened with more than 10 distinguished alumni from various parts of the country at the National University of Laos. The alumni expressed their appreciation of their alma mater and wished for the school's educational progress. Khonethong Soukphaxay, a 2018 graduate student majoring in forestry engineering, said with deep emotion: "I'm filled with gratitude towards the Asia-Pacific Forestry Organization for awarding me the scholarship to study at Nanjing Forestry University. I miss my school and the life there. The APFNet scholarship program is crucial for fostering forestry talents across all member economies in the Asia-Pacific region and benefits me as well. I aspire to use my knowledge to aid in the advancement of our national forestry education".

"APFNET SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM PROVIDES VALUABLE SUPPORT FOR EXPANDING OUR KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCE THROUGH CLASSROOM STUDIES WITH NUMEROUS PROFESSORS".

My name is Anousone Sengthong, graduated from Nanjing Forestry University in 2021, majoring in Forestry. I work at the Faculty of Forest Science, National University of Lao PDR. I am a lecturer, so my experience and knowledge will be shared with the students who will become forest staff or work in this field. This will contribute to the protection and development of forest management in Lao PDR. I started studying at Nanjing Forestry University under the APFNet Scholarship Program in 2019. It was great to have seniors who guided studying and adjusting to the new environment, making it easier for us to adapt. The international office staffs were very helpful in providing assistance and facilitating communication regarding study plans and interactions with our supervisors. Along with my classmates, we were able to share experiences and have discussions about forestry both in class and in our daily lives. These interactions made studying more manageable.

I would highly recommend the ASP (APFNet Scholarship Program) to other students or practitioners in the field of forestry. It supports expanding our knowledge and experience through classroom studies with numerous professors. Additionally, the opportunity to share information on forest management with classmates from different countries in the Asia Pacific region is beneficial for engaging in discussions and further developing our understanding of forest management practices in our respective countries.

Based on my experience, I decided to offer advice to current and future students who are interested in applying for an ASP. Here are some key recommendations: Plan your time effectively, engage with your professors and peers, develop good research and writing skills, and stay organized while managing your deadlines. Studying is not easy, but it is also not difficult if you have the right intention and put in the necessary effort. For working on research or writing a thesis, every piece of data is important. We have to plan clearly and decide how to collect data. After that, we should be careful during the analysis phase, using statistical tests to confirm and discuss the results.

Forests play a vital role in biodiversity. Nowadays, the impact of climate change and the loss of biodiversity have become significant problems in our world. Therefore, my current research focuses on biodiversity, specifically plant diversity. I sincerely hope that our work and research will help preserve forests and safeguard global biodiversity.

My expectations regarding the creation of an Alumni network are that it will serve as a means to connect us, allowing us to share our work and experiences in forestry. This collaboration will help us enhance our knowledge and maintain ongoing communication. It's good that we have the APFNet Alumni Network for following our research and sharing information. If we can have a seminar where everyone can join, it will be great to see each other on-site.

Anousone Sengthong, 2019 alumnus, NFU

Kawlin District in the Sagaing Region in the upper part of Myanmar is one important forested area. However, logging, mining, and agricultural expansions pose a threat to the region's forests, leading to deforestation and forest degradation. “By assessing land cover changes and identifying the driving factors behind them, coupled with spatial and statistical analyses of deforestation based on biophysical factors, forest managers can enhance their understanding of deforestation and facilitate the development of both forest management strategies and informed policy responses for future land cover trajectories”, Mr. Chan Myae Aung, an alumnus from NFU, who is now working in the Forest Research Institute, Forest Department, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation, Myanmar indicated. Under the guidance of Professor Dr. Zhang Zengxin, College of Forestry, NFU, Chan Myae Aung has conductedthe research: "Analysis of Land Cover Changes and Deforestation Drivers: Illustrated to Explore Potential Restoration Areas in Kawlin District, Sagaing Region in Myanmar." The study aims to assess land cover changes over 21 years (2000-2021) in Kawlin District, identifying biophysical factors influencing deforestation, and identifying suitable sites for forest restoration activities, especially teak plantations using remote sensing and GIS.

To detect changes in land cover over 21 years, the research primarily employs freely available Landsat 5 and 8 satellite images to generate land cover maps of the Kawlin district for the years 2000, 2011, and 2021, using supervised classification with the random tree classification approach. The results revealed that- forest areas slightly decreased from 49.33% in 2000 to 44.59% in 2011 and 40.50% in 2021. Degraded forest decreased from 25.13% in 2000 to 24.49% in 2011, however, in 2021, it increased up to 30.60%. The mining area steadily increased from 0.02% in 2000 to 0.17% in 2011 and 0.20% in 2021. Water and bare lands increased from 1.08% to 2.00% and 2.65% to 3.62% in 2000 and 2011, however, water decreased from 2.00% to 1.02% and barrens decreased from 3.62% to 1.59% between 2011 and 2021. Agriculture and built up steadily increased from 21.32% to 24.44% and 24.94%, and from 0.49% to 0.68% and 1.14% in 2000, 2011, and 2021 respectively.

The Analytic Hierarchy Process (AHP) method was used with six parameters, namely slope, land cover, stream, road, elevation, and settlements, which were considered to investigate the potential teak plantation areas within the study area. It was concluded that 10.25 % (66,566.61 ha) of the study area is highly suitable for teak plantations, 5.51% (35,742.69 ha) is moderately suitable, 11.32% (73,494.81 ha) is marginally suitable, and 72.92% (473,474.65 ha) is currently not suitable for teak plantations for designing appropriate restoration activities in Kawlin District

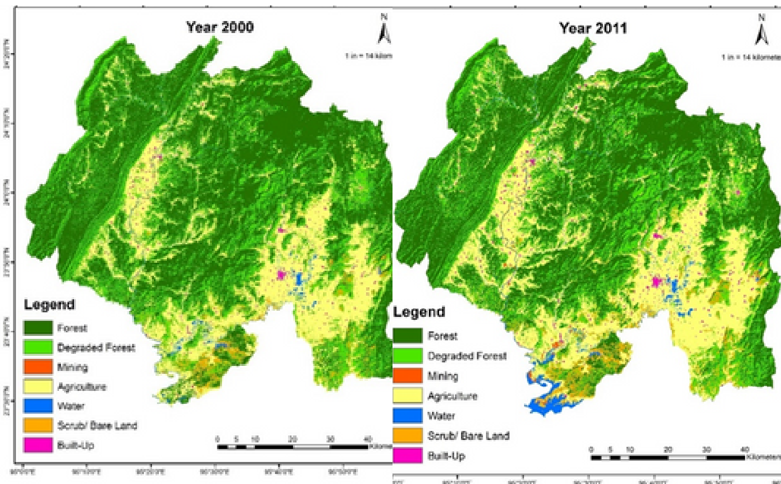

FIGURE 7: LAND COVER CLASSIFICATION MAP FOR 2000, 2011 AND 2021

Land cover maps for 2000, 2011 and 2021 were developed to detect recent land cover changes. Through change detection analysis, deforestation and forest degradation were quantified and the drivers of deforestation were estimated through spatial binary logistic regression model and random forest. In the present study, the trigger events such as socio-economic conditions, population, climate and cultural factors were not spatially distributed although they were considered important in the process of deforestation. The deforestation probability maps, which are essential for identifying potential deforestation hotspots, provide forest managers with invaluable tools for developing restoration plans and improving forest management related works, while also serving as an essential tool in preventing future deforestation. The final step was to provide spatial map for suitable teak plantation areas in Kawlin District. The results generated from this study can be used as a reference for reviewing the existing plantation establishment of Kawlin District. Furthermore, the recommended sites for teak plantation areas through this study could provide useful information for those who would like to invest in commercial plantation establishment in the study area.

CHAN MYAE AUNG (WITH GPS ON HIS HANDS) IS ON THE FIELD WITH HIS COLLEAGUE

Sharing about the difficulties during his research, Mr.Chan told: “As a result of the COVID-19 epidemic and political concerns in Myanmar, certain obstacles have occurred during my study period, such as limited power, internet access, assessing the field for ground truth, and so on. So, I made my schedule flexible and worked when I could. Finally, my research is not just maps and data; it is also a story of not giving up. Besides, the accomplishment of my study was greatly aided by my supervisor. His combination of expert knowledge, resourcefulness, and heartfelt support was vital in transforming challenges into possibilities. His guidance was rooted in years of experience and his deep understanding of both the subject matter and the practical challenges of conducting research under such conditions”.

Chan Myae Aung intend to expand his professional horizons by enhancing knowledge of remote sensing and GIS for forest management. This will prepare him for a Ph.D. degree, which will help him utilize to develop innovative technologies for forest management.

RESEARCH AREA

APFNET ALUMNI MUST INSPIRE AND MOTIVATE THE YOUNG GENERATION TO CONSERVE THE EARTH AND ENVIRONMENT!

One of my preferred activities each year is coordinating the environmentalist volunteer network for the Dushanbe city. Each segment of the process is fascinating. I spend my time listening to our wonderful volunteer committee as they deliberate on which environmental conservation event should progress, meeting the 140 future central Asia environmental leaders who come to the last ceremonial stage, and decide in which field the team should contribute time and knowledge to save the earth. This wonderful experience fills me with hope for the future. While it is tremendous fun being involved in habitat and environment protection. Together with my excellent Committee team, we need to address the challenges such as: “How do we create a more potential for the environmental protection?” The vital recourse comes from the different region and social group those who are equipped with the environmental science and practical. Some institutions regularly do well at the climatic and environmental awareness session, doing tree planting campaigns and some other related events at least every few years. Youth from this region are inspired to apply their gained knowledge and experience for conservation of their habitat and protection of nature to contribute their part for the next generation. the This kind of activity helps young people to bond together and think about the best solution of restoring the nature and build sustainable environment. Some of the community members may be unaware of the climate change impact on the planet or think that nature will combat with the changes keep the balance itself without human contribution.

Our team raises the awareness that we humane being cause the change and we must sacrifice something to keep the natural balance. One of the activists mentioned well in her speech that “We must plant more and more trees, throw garbage in the dustbins, avoid using plastic bags, etc. It cannot be denied that our natural environment is such an important part of our ecosystem. It is important to educate people about how the environment is getting damaged. Then only we can have green earth to live in.

SHAMIL IS SITTING ON THE BLUE BIKE, THE PHOTO WAS TAKEN IN GUANXI(CHINA) FILED VISIT WITH ALL APFNET ALUMNI -2019

To help bring the two ends of the spectrum closer together, the environmentalist volunteer network and the community began by holding presentations vertically and student conferences to speak directly to both potential audiences. This is the most direct way of engaging with community but is limited in terms of our available time and resources. The local stakeholders and my team decided to supplement our presentation outreach program by holding an annual teleconference. We invited university advisors and prospective candidates to listen in to learn about the climate change issues in the region and ask any questions on the NDC. This was done so that every social group had the opportunity to develop its own institutional knowledge.